

CROP PROTECTION IN SOUTHERN BRITAIN

10-11 February 2009



A determined audience of scientists, agronomists, technical specialists and students ran the gauntlet of snow, ice and floods in February to attend the second AAB 'Crop Protection in Southern Britain' conference at the East of England showground.

Over two days, discoveries, progress and experience in the areas of weed management, disease control and pest management were shared at both a research and practical level through presentations, questions and discussion. Prior to that though, David Richardson of

CRD had outlined the challenge ahead posed by new regulations for plant protection products, and the likely implications of the move to assessing safety based on hazard instead of risk. A common theme within the opening session was protecting human health, which continued with an examination of a practical approach to managing pesticide residues, and the impact of mycotoxin legislation on cereal crop production.

The disease control session that followed responded to these challenges with evidence of reductions in mycotoxins in wheat with fungicide use, and the potential for inorganic salts to contribute to foliar disease control. Papers then addressed the possible role of soil pathogens in yield limitation in oilseed rape, and the results of studies on foliar fungicide performance against leaf and stem diseases. The session concluded with information on a new fungicide for disease control in sugar beet, and the link between fungicide use and yield trends within the crop.

Day two began with Martin Wolfe of The Organic Research Centre, offering a different perspective on preventing agronomic problems by means of increasing diversity notably through the use of variety mixtures or segregating populations. This was followed by a comprehensive session on weed management, in which the main issues were grass weed control in cereals, including new herbicide options, managing resistance and maximising crop competitiveness. Finally the potential economics of herbicide-tolerant sugar beet were reviewed in a current context.

The final session explored developments within pest management, notably studies that have added significantly to our understanding of wireworm populations and the impact of aphid-borne Turnip yellows virus in oilseed rape. Practical solutions in the form of a new option for the control of pyrethroid-resistant pollen beetle in oilseed rape, and strategies for the control of Wessex flea beetle in herbage seed, completed the programme.

Overall the conference provided a great opportunity for researchers and practitioners to exchange views and ideas, on the problems and potential solutions for crop production and protection in southern Britain in the years ahead. We look forward to having the chance to meet again in two years to continue the discussion.

Stuart Knight, March 2009